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House Approves USA PATRIOT Act

Bill Will Help Strengthen National Security

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. House of Representatives approved final passage of H.R. 3199, the USA PATRIOT and Terrorism Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2005. The bill improves the ability of the U.S. Intelligence Community and law enforcement to protect domestic security.

“Our nation is fighting a war against terrorists who wish nothing more than to hurt Americans abroad and here at home,” said U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich., Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. “The PATRIOT Act provides our professional, highly trained law enforcement and intelligence officials the ability to track, find and stop foreign terrorists and spies before they have a chance to attack.

“Contrary to what some wrongly claim, the PATRIOT Act has nothing to do with investigating ordinary American citizens. The focus of this Act is the protection of our nation and its people.”

H.R. 3199 permanently reauthorizes many of the provisions of the PATRIOT Act that were set to expire at the end of the year. The bill extends the information-sharing provisions that allow intelligence and law enforcement officials to coordinate investigations of potential terrorist threats. It also clarifies the powers granted to investigators under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

The bill contains several measures to protect civil liberties and ensure the powers of the PATRIOT Act are not abused. Among them are required reporting to the Intelligence and Judiciary committees on PATRIOT Act usage and annual reports by the Justice Department Inspector General on investigations of PATRIOT Act-based complaints.

“Since we first enacted the PATRIOT Act in 2001, not one substantiated allegation of abuse of this law has occurred,” Hoekstra said. “But to ensure PATRIOT Act authorities are used properly, the Intelligence Committee will continue careful and vigorous oversight of the Act on an ongoing basis.”

Following Senate approval of the conference report, the bill goes to the President to be signed into law.